Loving You

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Loving You

by EarthsickWithoutYou

Summary

Sequel to "Watching You." Now that Hannibal has lied, stalked and manipulated his way into Will Graham's dull, sad life, he fears he has somehow *also* wandered right into the friend-zone. Little does he know, Will is desperately falling for him, but doesn't believe he's good enough to be loved by this handsome, brilliant older man and renowned surgeon. When Will continues dating other people in an attempt to get over his new friend Dr. Lecter, Hannibal finally gets pushed to the limit of how much jealousy he can endure.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Hannibal insisted on paying, as usual, and Will couldn't say no to him despite his pride and morality telling him he ought to pick up a bill on one of their outings now and then. But he never did.

He sat waiting for Hannibal in a small, cozy corner table in the autumn- glazed, tan-colored cafe called The Shop. It was a bookish, gentle, classy place, a safe haven. They played the same sort of laid-back jazz which Edwin kept on a continuous loop at Once and Again, his favorite bookstore.

Will remembered bringing Gray here one time on one of their doomed friend-zone fake-out quasi-dates. She had turned up her nose at the cafe, calling it "*a tragic hipster hovel*" and drumming her nails loudly on the table, asking if they could go somewhere with "*a little more action.*"

"*A little more action*" turned out to be a loud college bar so packed that they could barely see, much less hear each other, forget that. It took Will a half hour to get the bartender to come over, then he had to yell the drink order several times before finally getting it another fifteen minutes later while the music and loud voices and pushing, no oxygen and being crammed made him want to run for his life.

And when he had returned to where Gray was supposedly going to wait for him, she was gone, across the room leaning against a handsome graduate student with her hand fluttering at his shoulder in those flirtatious incidental touches Will knew all too well. She had forgotten about him. Again.

So, he'd had both drinks for himself, gulping them fast before stumbling outside and making it home only by the grace of god or pure, dumb luck. There had been too many nights like that, crushed by disappointment like a rose on the sidewalk, getting wasted and nearly or actually blacking out, waking up with a horrible hangover and regrets, shame, questions. Why did he keep doing this?

The answer seemed to be, he didn't deserve any better. Or why would every crush he had end up the same way, where he became an unpaid personal assistant and afterthought, the shoulder to cry on every time some other guy hurt them. If Will was good enough for the kind of real, passionate love he craved on a bone-deep level, then his mom wouldn't have left when he was a baby and his dad would've treated him better instead of letting him know what a disappointment he was anytime he wasn't drowned at the bottom of a bottle himself.

And if Will deserved love, the ones he gave his own to wouldn't consider him disposable, forgettable, merely convenient, *sometimes*.

This, obviously, was so depressing that drinking was the only way to cope. He tried to stick with books, spending time with the few good friends he did have, like Beverly Katz, and his other creature comforts that made him feel safe and a false but soothing sense of love. That wasn't always enough.

He kept his eyes on Dr. Lecter as the handsome, kind, sophisticated man in the flawless suit paid for their food and drink. For reasons that entirely escaped Will's understanding, this stunning and irresistibly charming man had not only saved him from getting run over by a train in his latest fit of childish idiocy and self-destructive, masochistic risk-taking, but also wanted to be friends. He was so nice to Will at the poetry reading that first night they met; he was endlessly attentive, without ever being pushy or presumptuous.

When they started meeting up for friendly trips to various art events, often with dinner to follow, there were many times he had paused to check if something was okay with Will or what he liked before proceeding.

As if Will wouldn't do anything this man wanted, as if he wouldn't hit his knees that second in this cafe and...well. Do anything. All it would take was a word from Dr. Lecter, who by now Will worshiped, having gotten there on a fast track from confused attraction and gratitude to a dumb crush from his usual nosebleed seats in the friend-zone, to now longing for the older man's attention with an intolerable craving that kept him up at night.

While the doctor made his way politely and smoothly back to their table, Will's eyes drank him in as sustenance for continuing to exist. He was perfect. A table of women his own age were staring at Hannibal and tried to get him to sit with them and chat, and Will's blood immediately boiled with jealousy, because several were very attractive. But Hannibal kindly turned them down, continuing in his path to the skinny, anxious boy in the corner.

With a sweet smile, the older man placed Will's London Fog tea latte in front of him, along with a cherry-coconut scone because "they look so fresh and delicious, don't they?"

"Yes, definitely," Will smiled, perking up and toying with the napkin near his plate, spinning it in circles, trying not to constantly gaze at his companion. "Thank you, Dr. Lecter. Please, let me pay next time. I feel bad that..."

"I wouldn't hear of it, Will." Dr. Lecter leaned across the table slightly, making the younger man's heart leap in his chest. "And please, you know I said you should feel free to call me Hannibal."

"Okay, Hannibal." Will turned the same color as the plump, juicy cherries in the scone he tried not to choke on. It was good, so good. And Hannibal doting on him was better. The best, actually.

"What a lovely place, thank you for introducing me to it," Hannibal continued breezily, drinking his cappuccino looking like a European aristocrat because he was, and that made Will feel not only about twenty- five years younger than him, but also about two inches tall.

Meanwhile, the ladies at the other table who had wanted Dr. Lecter's company were glaring at Will and gossiping, offended to see that all of the handsome doctor's attention seemed reserved for a nerdy-looking, poor- clothes wearing kid.

"I've never brought anyone here who saw in it what I see," Will admitted nervously. "It has an ambience. I love to come here and read, and look out the window to see the leaves in fall, the snow under the starlight in winter. The music is warm."

“Yes,” Hannibal nodded thoughtfully, “An almost cinematic feeling.”

“Right!” Will tried to control his excitement, but no one ever got him like this. “Yes, exactly. It’s, um, it makes me feel like I’m in a movie. A cool, cute vintage romcom, or something.”

“And how exactly do you know you’re not,” said Hannibal with another of those enchanting, knee-weakening smiles.

“Aw, I don’t know, everything that’s happened when I try dating?” Will laughed in self-derision that made Hannibal frown.

“You mustn’t give up on that romantic comedy in your heart, not if it’s what you want.” He seemed serious all of a sudden.

Will’s heart now fully burst and he wiped a few tears away, struggling to compose himself. How embarrassing...

“I’m sorry, it’s just...thank you. That means a lot to me.”

“Of course.” Hannibal took his hand for a moment and squeezed it, just long enough for Will to see through a teary haze the size difference between them and how gorgeous Hannibal’s hands were, big, strong, as if made to hold him. The hands that had saved him.

He looked up with hope that instantly shut itself down out of habit, and because the doctor had drawn his hand back again, whether so as not to intrude past the boundaries of friendship, or so as not to lead Will on in the direction of anything more.

“Are you thinking about Gray?” Hannibal asked gently.

He must think that was why Will was so emotional, oh *God!* If Hannibal only knew!

“In a way, I guess,” Will admitted, chewing his lip before continuing, curious that Dr. Lecter’s coffee-colored eyes lingered on this for several beats. “She was one of the dates I brought here who didn’t like it. We went somewhere else afterwards and the date got even worse. You know, that happened over and over with her, and I kept going back like a glutton for punishment.”

“I’m glad you recognize that this is a pattern you should stop.” Hannibal looked concerned, which of course was also sexy and confusing.

“I should be grieving Gray more, but it’s like I feel hollow about it, or else I’m angry at her for the way she treated me like garbage.” Will frowned guiltily. “I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I mean, I know anger is one of the phases of grief, so maybe that’s it...”

“Perhaps.” Hannibal looked mildly doubtful in an intriguing way.

“Bad habits are hard to break,” Will shared. “I get a crush on someone and just wanna be with them all the time. Before I know it, I’m standing at a concert I bought expensive tickets for and went broke over, for a band I don’t like, holding some girl’s purse while she flirts with another guy right in front of me. Because I’m such a *good friend*.”

“And you are a good friend, Will. But you should value yourself enough to say ‘no’ when someone tries to take advantage of your sincerity and generosity.”

“Why?” Will scoffed cynically.

Having this new crush that felt like love was making him even more insecure. Imagine falling for someone so much older, richer, more experienced and elegant, please, it was humiliating. He’d never, ever tell Dr. Lecter. God, imagine the embarrassment...

“I don’t know what you mean.” Hannibal’s brow knitted and he fidgeted with his coffee cup, a tiny tell indicating his own strong feelings, or probably Will just wanted to think that.

“Um...see, taking advantage of my time, my sincerity and generosity is pretty much the only reaction most people have to getting to know me.”

“Not everyone,” Hannibal insisted, almost getting a little worked up. “It bothers me to know you have these thoughts, and yet I am honored that you trust me enough to unburden yourself. I’m glad it’s me you’re telling, because I’m here to remind you, you shouldn’t ever let someone treat you that way again.”

“Yeah?” Will wiped at his eye with the heel of his hand, hating himself even as his heart soared at Dr. Lecter’s every word. “Why’s that?”

“Because,” and with clear-eyed emphasis, Dr. Lecter said the one thing Will never heard from his father or anyone in his life who was supposed to care about him, “You deserve better.”

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It was obvious to Hannibal he had wandered into an excruciatingly ironic role in Will’s life, that of the valued confidant and mentor, the friend who was the right one to phone for a movie at the indie theater on a rainy day, or to attend an avant-garde art exhibit, and even to sit quietly in a place such as this genuinely endearing cafe and simply talk. But he had yet to be the one Will turned to with those plush, sweet lips for a kiss, or the one whose hands Will placed on his devastating body to make love. Hannibal feared he was in the friend-zone himself, while consoling Will for the same with other love interests.

He could not quite determine if Will considered him only a platonic friend for moral and sensible considerations of the age difference and the power imbalance and/or for self-deprecating reasons such as Hannibal’s superior social class, upbringing, impressive career, skilled aristocratic hobbies, expertise, and his vast fortune.

But the real question was whether Will would want him, if those concerns, insecurities and false barriers between them were done away with. If he moved too soon, he could frighten off this soft, fragile creature, this angel who haunted his every breathe with unbearable desire. *Oh, Will.* It was torture to touch his hand only for a moment, and to have to cherish such tiny interactions as helping the boy on with his coat or a chaste hug goodnight. He was going mad.

Each day he seemed in greater danger of ruining everything he'd worked for over months now, every way he had integrated himself into Will's life through exhaustive methods of following him, bugging his apartment, watching his every move, listening to his every precious word, examining his relationships, his academics. Knowing just what to say and do to make sure he stayed right by Will's side until he became impossible to live without.

It would be all too easy to kiss Will suddenly, as if to kiss the sense into him and show him exactly what he deserved every day of his life, which was to be spoiled silly by an older man who knew how to treat a nice boy like that right.

And he had almost killed Alana Bloom four separate times by now. Will's imposing, judgmental and cloyingly moralistic friend had questioned their friendship at every opportunity, and it was enough to make Hannibal tighten an imaginary noose around her annoying throat. The only way to get through an encounter without acting on the urge.

No one must keep him from Will. Not this pushy friend who Will only kept around because he was too nice to tell her where she could stick her irritating, intrusive "advice."

Not the hook-ups from the parties and bars where Will still spent his nights apart from Hannibal, going home with or bringing home with him yet another conquest who took what they wanted and left him in the dust.

Too many times Hannibal had suffered through watching these encounters, knowing he could not kill them all any more than he could do so to Alana; two murders this close together before meeting Will had been necessary, but enough of a risk without going further. Yet.

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That night it happened again. All of it.

First, Hannibal attended a small party at Alana Bloom's posh apartment, populated by more of the intolerable and flavorless snobs she preferred to spend her time with. Will was her favorite charity case. As if Will wasn't the sun, the moon and stars, the only reason that the planet or anything, anyone on it had meaning.

And he was charming as always, shaking hands and making easy small talk with the snobs. Will was so grateful, murmuring "thank you for saving me again. I really hate going to these things and never know what to say to anyone."

Will's sweetness and reliance on him, which prefigured codependency in a most promising manner, made Hannibal discard his worries for a moment, focusing only on his feelings and the beauty of his friend.

"And what do you usually do, when you don't know what to say at one of these things?"

He smiled as Will blushed, adjusting his cute glasses and running a hand through his soft brunette curls. The boy looked luscious as ever in a simple outfit of an oatmeal-colored henley under a sage jacket, with a pair of skinny jeans that enticed Hannibal to try and get him alone, though it was taking a risk.

“Let me show you,” Will smiled, perhaps not as innocently as usual.

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Will had gotten up the nerve to bring Hannibal to his usual hiding place in Alana’s apartment, a reading nook at the top of the stairs right before you turned towards the bedrooms (this was more like a house than a damn apartment if you asked Will). In this nook, Will had spent his fair share of hours curled up with a good novel or poetry collection, tucked behind a convenient curtain on the cushioned window seat. But now that he had his older crush here, what the hell was he going to do?

“This is a wonderful secret place,” Hannibal said in a hushed tone, acting like a spy, making Will giggle.

“Thank you. I can admit that Alana’s other friends aren’t my cup of tea, but her books are. Check this out.”

He reached underneath the window seat where they sat side by side in the small space, and by memory retrieved his favorite two hardcovers. “I leave these right in the middle for easy access,” he laughed, eyes sparkling as he shared yet another little thing that was special to him and no one else had ever cared about before.

“Oh, my goodness,” said Dr. Lecter with reverence, admiring the old edition of *Far from the Madding Crowd* which Will had passed to him, trying not to faint when their hands brushed.

Hannibal was dressed in perfect semi-formal style for an evening cocktail party in a grey shirt that was silver under the light, matching the same shade in his hair and making him look so distinguished and sensuous. A tailored waistcoat, showing off his trim but strong body. Will would love to take those clothes off of him piece by piece before fucking him right here on this damn window seat.

He could almost taste the man’s cock in his mouth, though he’d never done that before. Still, he was an imaginative person, and Hannibal was...inspiring...

Stop with these foolish thoughts, idiot, not again with the unrequited love, this is terrible. STOP.

So he tasted the glass of cool white wine he’d brought with him instead, then placed it on the windowsill to join Hannibal in looking at the novels.

Dr. Lecter was flipping through the Thomas Hardy one and murmuring, “I read this at university, though I don’t remember it in detail...”

“*And at home by the fire, whenever you look up, there I shall be – and whenever I look up, there you shall be.*” Will turned red when Hannibal looked up from the book and met his eyes intensely.

The younger man sighed as his lonely heart throbbed, just like Gatsby’s dumb old boat beating ceaselessly against the current.

“That’s my favorite part, anyway,” he added awkwardly, then, before Hannibal had time to remark on it, he continued, “And this is the nicest edition of *Wuthering Heights* I’ve ever seen.”

Hannibal was *so* close to him, and though Will moved on from the tender moment, the older man did not. Will felt those beautiful, deep eyes still watching him intently. He could feel the warmth of Hannibal’s body and smell the equally warm, manly and exquisite cologne on his skin, and let himself become mesmerized by the veins on the doctor’s beautiful hands, still holding the book, caught between the pages.

The tension ached in Will and he was going to cry again if he didn’t end this encounter soon. So why didn’t he want it to end? Why would he be perfectly happy to stay right there in this mysterious moment of wanting and almost having, and getting this foolish but exquisite hope that was almost as good as actually being loved by this man? Because he would do that, he’d stay in this in-between. Knowing they could never really be a couple, because he wasn’t good enough by a few thousand miles, Will wished he never had to move again.

“Will?” Hannibal asked, most likely concerned because he’d fallen so silent, staring down at his own feet, praying to either die or stay there, and he couldn’t say a word.

“I’m sorry,” he finally ventured.

“Whatever for?” Dr. Lecter moved slightly closer and just tugged Will’s sleeve a little, setting his skin aflame. “Do you ever ask yourself that?”

“Not until now,” he admitted with his heart pounding and his breath hitching in a quiet, intense panic.

Alana was looking for him; they could hear her voice echoing around the corner of the entrance room downstairs, then her proper little pumps walking upstairs.

They weren’t doing anything crazy, they were just sitting there reading, but since it was the single most genuinely erotic experience of Will’s life, he didn’t want to have it with Alana’s presence interrupting it.

He smiled ruefully at Hannibal and wiped at his face, wondering why Dr. Lecter kept spending time with him when he was a dumb nervous wreck who cried way too often. “I’m right here,” he said with a forced friendly tone, pulling the curtain back so that Alana saw him and Hannibal.

She frowned. “Are you?”

Will didn’t need more of her judgment, not now. For some reason, she had always been suspicious of Hannibal’s presence in his life, and it was a real mood-killer.

“Yup. I was showing Dr. Lecter my favorites from your collection. I hope you don’t mind,” he answered, noticing how Hannibal had gone more tense beside him.

Probably sick of Alana's insulting low-key accusations flying at him every time they were in the same room, and Will didn't blame him.

"Of course not," Alana gave them a fake smile and asked Will to come down and meet a friend of hers who knew *that professor who's in charge of the fellowship,* the words blurring in his confused state. He knew this was the grant he'd been after for his graduate thesis, and therefore followed her with an apologetic smile to Dr. Lecter.

"You should go, of course," Hannibal smiled. Was it as complicated a smile as Will thought in that moment?

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Alana cornered Hannibal in the kitchen when he had the good grace to channel his caged murderous intentions towards her and the rage which occasioned them after she interrupted his encounter with Will, right when –

He had the good grace to help the catering staff bring some of the dishes to the kitchen, as he'd spent quite long enough watching Will chatting with people who didn't deserve to breathe the same air, who didn't deserve to look at him. And perhaps they meant to take Will away to some other university in a far off place where he would not want Hannibal to follow, unless, *unless* Hannibal read the tension between them right – behind the curtain, in the nook – Will's words and the vulnerable look on his face had his heart in a vice grip; he couldn't get them out of his head.

This was a bad time for Alana to confront him in that tacky little black dress from last season and shoes that were two shades off from matching. She crossed her arms and said, "Do you know many men in their late forties, established professionals with a lot of money who are best friends with a twenty-three year old student who doesn't have *any* money or many other friends looking out for him?"

"If you have a point, other than insulting Will's social class and my own intentions, please, by all means get to it," Hannibal urged her in a cold tone.

There was a favorite cake recipe that came to mind at the moment because of the large chocolate-frosted cake on the counter behind Alana. He called it the shattered glass cake, being that it was an adaptation of the brownie lava cake with a center of dark red raspberry jam. The filling gushed like blood when one cut into the cake, and he embellished it with sugar "glass shards." The guests at his dinner party had been so impressed and delighted with his latest theatrical presentation, little guessing it came from channeling his venomous wrath towards this obnoxious young woman who now stood before him.

But, oh, the *pain* she would suffer, at his earliest convenience, when he knew he wouldn't be caught or suspected. Alana really had no idea what she was setting herself up for, and he couldn't wait for her to find out.

"My point is that the power imbalance in your so-called friendship makes any such friendship impossible, and to go around attached to each other like this, you're either using him or leading him on, but whatever it is, it's making me very uncomfortable." She scowled.

“Is that so?” Hannibal had poured himself a glass of wine and availed himself of an elegant, long sip before answering, “I don’t have the time or the patience to explain my good intentions towards Will Graham, or to waste any such speeches on you. Suffice it to say, what’s between us is none of your damned business, and you ought to learn how to mind your own while you are at it.”

He smiled poisonously, picturing her as a human version of the shattered glass cake, huge shards of jagged glass puncturing her all over as her vital organs and blood poured from her abdomen like a waterfall, covering the floor, flooding it.

“Good evening to you,” he finished. “I’ll wait for Will outside.”

Alana huffed at him. “You’re a cool customer, but I see through you.”

He just finished his wine and gave her the same enigmatic, chilly smile before going outside to wait by the car, thinking that it was sad for Alana she did see through any part of it, even as little as she understood it. He didn’t want to take advantage of Will to lead him on or use him. He only wanted to have the boy for his own, and he would. That much was certain. The likes of Alana could never hold him back.

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Alana had a firm talking-to with Will as well, wearing him out when his emotions were already beaten to a pulp.

“Can’t you see it’s inappropriate? You let him spend all this money on you,” Alana complained, nodding at his brand new, high end leather book-bag as Will gathered his things and prepared to go.

He’d just come into the guest room where everyone’s coats and bags were, to get his stuff and bolt. Alana was officially on his last nerve now.

“The dinners at all these extravagant restaurants, the –”

“So what?” he demanded stormily, finally losing his temper. “So what, Alana, huh? Someone cares about me enough to give me nice things, and you, with all your goddamn money just can’t stand to see it? I bet it really burned you the first time I introduced you, when he didn’t even look at you despite your obvious attempts to flirt with him.”

Alana was struck silent, too shocked at the accurate commentary to reply right away.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought,” he snapped, looping the beautiful red wool scarf, which Hannibal had also given him, around his neck. “Could you please not insult me and make me feel even worse by suggesting Hannibal has any romantic or sexual designs on me, huh? When it’s quite obvious he’ll never see me that way because he’s out of my league and I would be a simpleton to think otherwise?”

“Will,” she said, her face falling, “I didn’t mean–”

“I don’t care what you meant,” he replied coldly.

Then he left as planned, slamming the door of her stupid fancy apartment behind him.

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He didn't talk much when Hannibal took him home; he just got through it and then went inside to cry his eyes out holding Zoe for a while in his apartment. Luckily the roommates were out at their latest rager by now.

After he was done crying for the time being, Will looked through his texts and found that a guy he'd been sort of interested in dating had contacted him, asking to meet up at a bar later. He texted back an enthusiastic affirmative. He needed to go out, get drunk out of his mind and hopefully have some great sex with someone who could get Hannibal Lecter out of his system.

Will had been curious about being with a man for a while now, even before Dr. Lecter, though obviously more so after. He could just dive into this new possibility that was actually possible, and try to escape all the love pressing in on him from every pore of his being for someone he could never have.

Shots with Colton at Muldowney's, that was the ticket. A place nobody brought a real date to, but perfect for intended one night stands. And this, this, as he hated himself and showered before dressing up in as attractive a manner as he could, this was what he deserved.

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Hannibal was let in by the roommates, who barely acknowledged his existence and tended to call him "*sure dad*" or "*okay grandpa*" whenever he came to visit Will and greeted them or asked a simple question.

Normally, he'd have viciously slaughtered and eaten all three of them by now, but it was a testament to the severity of this situation that they were so far down on his list of enemies. As it was, he found himself grateful that they let him in without asking any questions. Their classless behavior and disregard for Will was in this case to his benefit. He followed Will to Muldowney's and saw him meet a young man who was likely a teacher's assistant, older than Will but not quite a professor. A Phd candidate, he quickly discovered upon using a face capture app on his phone to desperately seek out the man's identity. Colton Boone, admitted to Will's ivy league not for his academic brilliance like Will was, but because he was a Legacy.

An heir to an oil dynasty, with a massive inheritance coming to him in a few years. And, according to another article he quickly scanned, engaged to marry an heiress of equal stature named Pippa Miller.

His anger, which had gone volcanic during the night since Alana ruined his perfect chance to lean in and kiss Will at last, was now getting perilous. He stared, as usual, from his careful and expert distance, as Will had shot after shot with this slimy if attractive man who was obviously using him for an easy lay before going back to the boring but necessary fiancee.

He had to watch as their dancing went from funny and joking to amorous, to Will drunkenly letting Colton touch him to excess and then grinning, although his eyes, when Hannibal zoomed in with his phone camera, looked desperately sad. And this was enough. *Enough* was enough. Hannibal was done.

This was not going to happen again. He knew that grin of Will's. The next step was that he would take Colton home, into his little bedroom, for sex, and be abandoned immediately after.

And he might have let this go a few times previously, but this time was different for several reasons. What pushed him over the edge was the thought of Will being with another man for his first time. He was still a virgin in that sense, and the idea of that repulsive swine taking Will's virginity like he would use an atm machine for a quick bit of spending money made him sick.

How could Will give himself to someone so vile and unworthy? When someone who wanted nothing else anymore but to love and adore him forever was *right there*? Hannibal was losing his mind over this.

So he rushed ahead to the apartment and got there before Will. And he waited on the battered couch in the tv room wedged between the four tiny bedrooms, claustrophobic kitchen and even smaller bathroom.

He had waited too long, with his meticulous planning and his need to be sure of not losing Will before making his move. He ought to have kissed Will at that party, Alana be damned; he should have kissed the boy the first night after the poetry reading when Will's curious eyes sized him up with blossoming interest. He should have kissed Will in the movie theatre on that rainy day, or across the table in the cafe when it was all he wanted.

Now he knew his mistake, but it wasn't too late to fix it. If he must take a risk, so be it. Nobody, much less an adulterous, spoiled cretin, would claim Will's beautiful and precious body ever again, except for Hannibal.

Will brought his date in by the back door and then led him into his bedroom without having to pass by Hannibal, an unfortunate inconvenience. He could hear Will laughing and throwing himself all over Colton, then the telltale sound of his favorite playlist starting up, all his sensitive romantic songs that completely had nothing to do with this sort of tryst. It killed Hannibal.

He went quickly to the door and knocked loudly. Will opened it, with his shirt half-unbuttoned and lips kiss-swollen, staring at Hannibal in disbelief.

Hannibal could only imagine what his own face must look like right then. He was beyond self-control and into some other realm that terrified him. The anger and desire and love were all he could feel or express.

"Hannibal, what's going on? Is everything okay?"

"Please come into the kitchen, Will, I need to have a word."

“Will, come back,” Colton ordered, obviously drunk as well. “Who the fuck is that old guy? Get rid of him.”

Hannibal put his hand on the door firmly and pushed it open, staring with all his molten hate at the despicable young man. “I have asked for a few minutes of Will’s time. Why don’t you take those same few minutes to think about what you are doing, and who else might be hurt by your actions?”

“Who the fuck is this guy? Will’s not going with you, he’s staying right here with me, right, bab–”

Hannibal cut him off at that. “Be quiet. Stop talking. Stop,” he repeated when Colton’s mouth opened again, then finally, “Shut up, Colton, if you know what’s good for you.”

“Come on to the kitchen, hey, what’re you doin’, don’t yell at him like that,” Will urged, but Hannibal gave Colton a triumphant smirk. Will went with him after all, when it would have been easy to tell him to leave.

“What the...” he heard Colton saying from the bedroom, but Hannibal didn’t care; let the pig treasure his few minutes in Will’s small room which he had decorated so carefully with his favorite colors and literary quotes hung on the walls, which he filled with his heart and his dreams and sensitive music. It would be the first and last time.

Once they were in the kitchen, Will turned on him demanding an explanation.

“Hey, Hannibal, what the fuck? I actually really like that guy, what are you doing? Is there an emergency or something? And how do you know his name?” Will was upset, but he hadn’t decided in what way yet, looking torn between angry and hurt.

The narrow space between the counter and table seemed an insufficient amount of room for such a heavy conversation, but once again, so be it.

Sighing, Hannibal admitted, twisting the truth just enough to make himself still a contender for Will’s heart, but not enough to outright lie, “I was coming to visit you, and saw you go inside with Colton, I heard his name then. And I came inside too, because you’re obviously not in your right mind and should not be going any further with that reprehensible specimen in there.”

His anger had finally seeped out and Will stepped back, shocked at it. “What’s gotten into you? I don’t understand.”

“You’re intoxicated, and about to have intercourse. You are in no place to consent,” Hannibal fumed.

“Who cares? Everyone has sex when they’re drunk, Hannibal. *Jesus*!” Will put his palm against his forehead. His skin was flushed from drink and emotions. “And I mean...at this point now that you ruined the mood, I don’t even feel that drunk anymore. I have a pretty high tolerance, as it happens. I’m an adult and I know what I can handle, okay?”

“Oh, do you really?” Hannibal demanded, stepping closer again. Will stared up at him in astonishment. “You can handle that vile scum in there? Do you know he has a fiancee?”

Will sighed. True to his word, all it took was a sudden argument to slap the drunkenness right out of him. He spoke with certainty, quite lucid: “It doesn’t surprise me. Listen, this is my love life, okay, this is how it goes. There isn’t anyone who’s gonna want to date me seriously, so I take what I can get. I need a little intimacy, you don’t think I deserve that?”

“You?” Hannibal scolded incredulously, “That young man is trash and doesn’t even deserve to touch your shirt sleeve, never mind being worthy of something so very precious–”

“Stop making it such a big deal!” Will was crying, and it cut Hannibal’s heart deeply to see it. He was angry and confused, wounded by what he perceived as Hannibal judging him like Alana had. “It’s not something that’s gotta be deserved. It’s not precious, it’s just...” His tongue ran across the back of his teeth, and he shrugged. “My body.”

“You can’t be serious,” Hannibal said heatedly, just as the kitchen door swung open on rusty hinges.

“Listen, I’m out,” Colton informed Will. “You clearly have a lot more to say to this senior citizen than me. Have a good life, I guess.” He rolled his eyes as if it was Will’s loss. Then he left.

And Hannibal returned his scorching gaze to Will’s now pale and offended face. “Aren’t you going to tell him to stay? Beg, perhaps?” he asked, almost mocking. He was so mad that he couldn’t stop himself being so aggressive, trying to open Will’s eyes but making his own feelings abundantly clear in what was probably not the most appealing way.

“Don’t you fucking make fun of me!” Will pushed him away, but Hannibal caught his wrist to make him stay. “You were my friend, but you just came here to give me preachy advice and try to control me. Because you feel sorry for me. Because I’m weak and you’re strong, I’m nothing and you’re everything.”

“How can you think such things?” Hannibal’s grip on Will’s wrist loosened. “Will...”

“I’m not your kid, okay, you’re not my dad. Stop tryin’ to look out for me! I...for a while I figured Colton might be my first time with a guy and now that’s out the window. I’m so alone, Hannibal, and you don’t need to come here making sure that on top of definitely gonna die alone, I also don’t get laid.”

“I’m not your father, Will, you’re damn right about that,” Hannibal replied, voice gone hoarse with feeling.

“Stop, cut it out, and don’t touch me like that,” Will cried, tears cascading down his beautiful face as if Hannibal had shattered his heart. He twisted out of Hannibal’s grip and backed up. “Don’t – please stop teasing me and playing with me like I’m a little piece of food on your plate. Don’t let me think this is anything more when it’s just pity and you bein’ nice – till now, anyway – to someone so ridiculously beneath you it’s a joke.”

“What’s a joke?” Hannibal followed up, his heart about to burst right out of his chest.

“Me? And me, being stupidly in love with you, okay?” Will shuddered, then landed on the floor and crossed his arms over his knees, forming a tight ball before he cried more into his arms. “So stupid, please leave. I’m so humiliated, don’t feel sorry for me and make it worse.”

“Come here, sweetheart,” Hannibal urged gently. He pulled Will into his arms and Will disintegrated, sobbing into his shirt.

“I love you,” Will cried, and Hannibal lifted him up, carrying him to his room and closing the door behind them.

He kissed the boy’s flushed brow and murmured, “Everything’s going to be alright.”

“Just hold me and let me pretend it’s real,” Will begged, snuggling into Hannibal on the bed, obsessively clinging and smelling his chest.

“There isn’t anything to pretend, baby,” Hannibal soothed, finally opening the floodgates. He held Will and kissed his head again, rocking him. “I love you, Will. I’ve always loved you.”

“As a father figure or a friend or a mentor, I get it, please be quiet. This will be fantasy material for me that’ll last ages–”

“Will, I don’t want to be your friend or mentor, and if you ever call me Daddy, I prefer it to be erotically, while I’m holding you down and making love to you the way you deserve. With all the love and passion in my heart that is consuming me. Do you understand?”

Will pulled back, still clutching at Hannibal’s shirt and crying, his chest rising and falling quickly, eyes huge in the dim room. The background music shifted, “Alison” by Elvis Costello now playing tenderly. Will’s expression changed, shocked by overwhelming, impossible happiness.

“You...you really mean that?” He asked, “You were jealous?”

“Yes, darling,” Hannibal admitted sheepishly, “If anyone’s embarrassed, it’s me. I lost my temper and should not have been so harsh with you.”

“That’s okay,” Will laughed and the sad crying stopped. He smiled and traced Hannibal’s face with his shaking fingers. “I...kind of liked it. You were scolding me. Like I belong to you.”

“You do belong to me,” Hannibal assured him, voice husky. He drew Will fully into his lap, and Will put his hands into Hannibal’s hair, Hannibal holding him by the small of his back and his face.

Will leaned down and brushed their lips together, making them both lose their breath and moan. “Oh, god.” He kissed Hannibal again and again as if desperate and shocked that Hannibal kept letting him. “Tell me, please, again.”

Hannibal laid him down and hovered over him, brushing his unruly curls back. “I love you, baby. You’re mine and no one else’s. Aren’t you, now?”

“Y-yes, yes,” Will blurted in a panic of disbelief.

“I’m not ever leaving you, please don’t worry anymore. I love you,” Hannibal kissed his lips, amazed at how soft and perfect they were, and this time, he gently parted them with his tongue, pressing inside to taste Will more fully.

“I love you,” he repeated after the deeper kiss left Will staring up at him, his body gone utterly pliant. “I’ll take care of you from now on.”

He unraveled Will slowly from his clothes, pressing a burning kiss to every new part of his body that was revealed to hungry amber eyes. Hannibal’s groans of pleasure at just seeing and kissing Will blew the younger man away. He’d never been savored before.

“So beautiful, Will,” he murmured in awe, licking the boy’s pretty, rosy nipples, then biting them when the boy moaned loudly. “So beautiful, so mine. You’re daddy’s good boy.”

He trailed his open mouth down Will’s torso with more wet kisses, teasing by almost reaching the boy’s throbbing hard-on before rising back up and kissing his mouth again.

But now he kissed with such wild, demanding heat that Will couldn’t even complain about how badly he needed Hannibal to go down on him. He just kissed back, their tongues tangling, his trembling hands undressing Hannibal so that they could press naked together, the older man seeming so much bigger as he gathered Will in his powerful arms and took him over.

When he sucked at Will’s cock, then licked his hole, the boy became a weak, moaning mess, covering his face and crying with nothing but bliss this time. From being someone’s one night stand who rarely even got to come, this must be a huge change and another overwhelming experience, to be treasured, to be put above Hannibal’s own pleasure, which was to be found in pleasuring Will, making Will happy first.

Slowly, as he kissed Will’s neck and marked it with his bites and sucking, as Will’s back arched and he moved against the big fingers now sliding inside him, slicked with lube, slowly he began to fuck his precious boy for the very first time. He was careful, but Will was excited and eager, which helped his body to relax more easily than might otherwise have been the case.

As it was, he moved back and forth to meet every deeper slide of Hannibal’s fingers until he was filled by three and begging to be fucked.

“Daddy, fuck me.” Hannibal fell apart at the words he’d so longed to hear.

He could do nothing but satisfy the boy’s plea, and so he took his time, while caressing Will’s face, murmuring what a good boy he was and how well he was doing, gradually pressing his cock into the perfect heaven of velvety tightness that was his sweet boy inside.

“Oh, Will,” he moaned, holding the boy down as he had promised, keeping him in one piece despite how hard he trembled and cried for Daddy to keep going, first “*deeper*,” then “*harder,*” until Hannibal began to thrust in more firmly, then, the more Will begged and cried

tears of pleasure, telling him how he loved it and Hannibal felt so good, "*faster*," so that Hannibal pounded him into the bed until the whole thing creaked and slammed into the wall.

His boy had never come untouched, and his eyes went huge, his mouth wide open on a tremulous whimper when Hannibal had pleasured his prostate so deliberately and hard that he exploded into orgasm, covering them both in his release, panting out apologies that were kissed and fucked away. Hannibal held him down even harder as he climaxed, his muscles tensing while his release spilled deep in his precious boy.

Will was comforted and aroused by being marked in this way, and he still uttered feather-soft moans, offering meek kisses and protestations of "do we really have to stop now? It's so good..."

"Hmm. Only for now, my love." Hannibal spooned behind him and held him close, kissing his dear shoulder, his neck where he'd left love bruises, smelling his hair, sighing in relief such as he had never felt. "You're even more perfect than in my dreams."

"I guess we must have that in common, then," Will said with a cheeky smile that got him soundly kissed.

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Life continued in this ecstatic way for several weeks, wherein the only wonderful change to Will's daily life was that he never went back to the cheap little apartment full of rude roommates again, he never had to *want* for anything again, and from "friends attached at the hips," he and Hannibal became inseparable lovers, soulmates.

They did everything together. Hannibal supported Will in his studies and helped him prepare his thesis by offering kind and helpful critique, plus listening to the boy recite his main points from memory until he was ready for the committee. When Will won his research grant, Hannibal took him to dinner in a limo at the most glamorous restaurant Will had ever seen, where he was pampered with every delicacy he could never previously afford.

At home, each day and night found him equally spoiled, in the lap of luxury and the lap of his indulgent Daddy. Beverly's jokes about his "sugar daddy," which came with a side of being glad Will was happy, only made Will laugh and confirm it to be true. He wore the finest clothes, which to his amusement were not only designer and sophisticated, but also quite sleek and flattering to his figure. Daddy loved to dress Will up just to undress him.

Bubble baths and all-night lovemaking, presents showered on him and weekends away for hotels and sight-seeing and more of the same whirlwind romance had Will on cloud nine. Zoe had come with him to the amazing new home, and had her very own little canopy bed and the finest of every dish, toy and treat.

On the day he found out that Hannibal had known of him long before ever approaching him, and that there had been a planned design to the courtship which evolved whilst his lover-to-be lurked, unseen in the shadows, Will was in a great mood and not expecting any dramatic surprises. He visited Edwin at the bookstore and told his friend that he was in a happy

relationship, showing off the latest vacation photos as he stood at the register, with plenty of money from the allowance Hannibal provided, in order to purchase any books he liked.

“Oh, so I was right. Your secret admirer,” Edwin smiled, recognizing Hannibal.

“What on earth do you mean?” Will asked, baffled as something made him feel slightly alarmed.

“That’s the handsome and rather wealthy gentleman who was watching you on the day you chatted with your friends from college. I remember, it was the day Princess the fourth had her latest batch of kittens.” He nodded at Princess, who was sleeping on a book on the counter nearby.

“Oh...kay, but that was weeks before I even met Hannibal,” Will’s brow furrowed in confusion. “Maybe you’re mistaken, remembering it wrong or there’s just a resemblance?”

“I don’t think so, my old eyes aren’t that worn out yet,” Edwin chuckled. “I thought you must already be acquainted with him because he stared at you so attentively, but stayed out of your sight, then after you left, he bought all the books you’d admired. It seemed like he was courting you and just wanted to know what kind of gift to purchase you. And that can’t be too far off considering that you’re so in love with him now.”

“You’re right, Edwin, of course,” Will lied, no need to include his friend on this particular conundrum. He wasn’t sure what he was going to do, and therefore he had to keep it to himself. “I must have mixed up the days and forgotten which one it was that I met Hannibal on.”

After some more friendly conversation and a distracted book purchase, Will made it home to Hannibal’s stunning mansion before his lover. He went to Hannibal’s side of their luxurious bedroom and opened the bottom drawer, which he had noticed the older man never seemed to use.

Inside, he discovered the books just as Edwin had said, wrapped in a lovely blue ribbon to match his eyes. A note in Hannibal’s perfect cursive said “For You.” Will dropped to the floor in front of the drawer.

It was eerie and unsettling to realize Hannibal had...sort of...stalked him, a little, or for all he knew, more than a little, before they met. And the chances of this seemed so unlikely given that they met from an accident. The more he thought about it, Will guessed Hannibal might have been following him that night and was spurred to action by his fall.

But Hannibal had still saved him from dying on that train track and continuing to throw his feelings and time away on bad lovers, and never having someone to love and understand him. He had still given Will all of his heart and shared his home, his devotion. Made Will happier than he thought possible, and none of that felt like a lie.

The truth was, no matter what Hannibal was hiding, Will just knew nothing could make him stop loving the man. It was a matter of wanting to know him entirely, the way he was known

by Hannibal, to the core. Yes, he was frustrated and a little hurt by the deception, but this only firmed up his resolve to solve the mystery. He closed the drawer and sat on the bed.

He'd follow *Hannibal* this time, see what he got up to when he was away from Will, get to the bottom of this. And then he would confront his lover with the demand that they get on the same page with Hannibal never lying to him again.

Although he was a bit frightened by the revelation of deceit and stalking, the flattering obsession from someone he was obsessed with had him confusedly blushing. And when Hannibal got home that night their lovemaking was even more wild and passionate than usual. Will couldn't hold back his feelings, no matter how they raged from one extreme to another or mixed it all up, love, frustration, fear and anger, obsession and need. It was all for Hannibal, and so was he, come what may.

The only thing that remained was to make absolutely sure Hannibal was not going to hide from him or hold back his truth, *ever* again.

End Notes

To be continued...🖤🌹

Series playlist: https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5hAdbjZbf7G1Lci0zLf0OF?si=85dd385a2ccd4740
(there's a piece of music from the movie *Phantom Thread,* which I imagine playing in the background of the reading nook scene in this story 🥺)

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